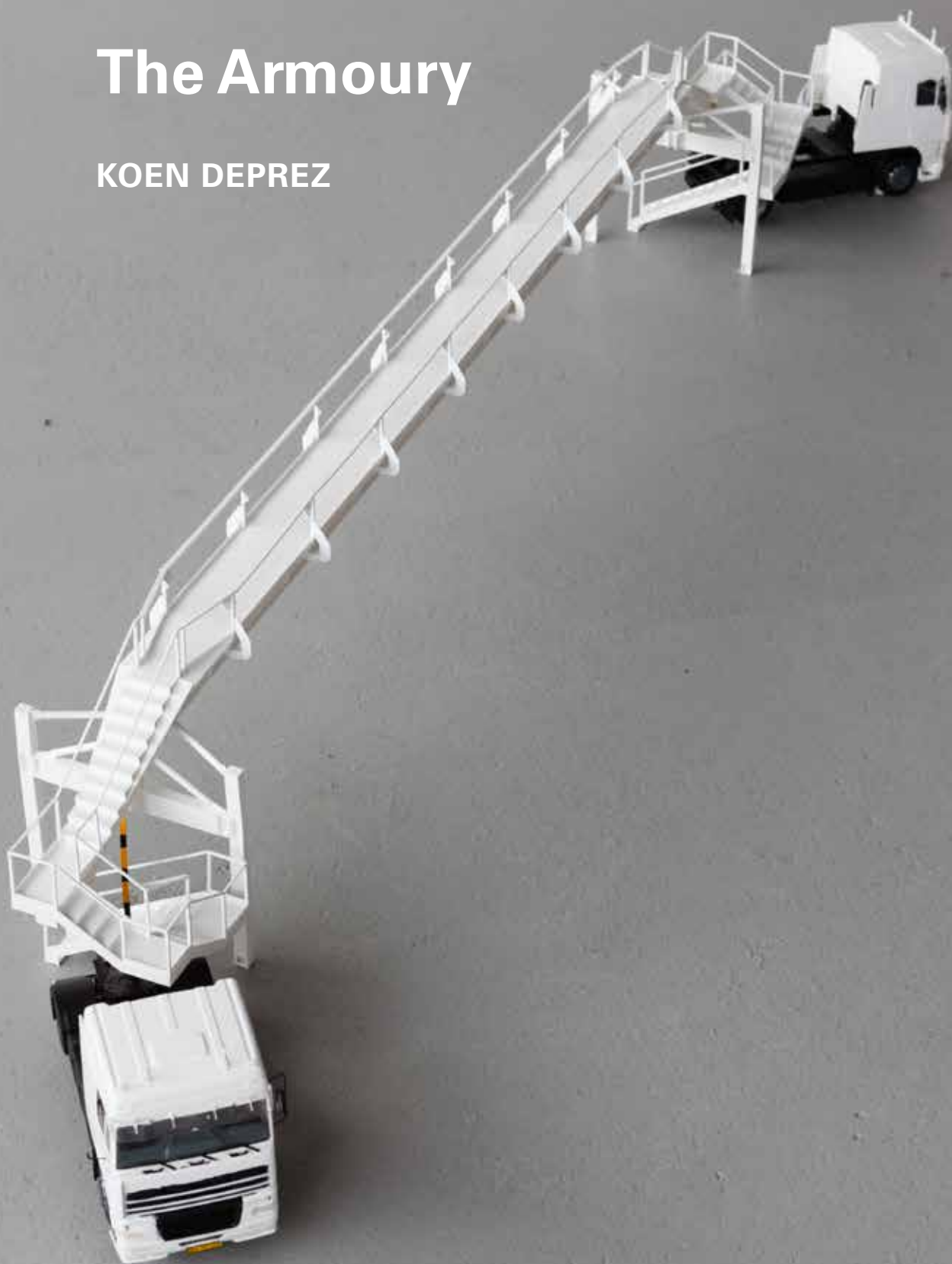


# The Armoury

KOEN DEPREZ







Спутник, 770 x 1020 mm, 2016  
courtesy Galerie Zwart Huis, Knokke

THE HAPPY DAYS OF CHARLES THE FIRST.

*A. Wilson. Engraved by J. Smith. From the original picture in the collection of the Earl of Arundel.*

*Handwritten signature or mark.*



# The Armoury

Robin Schaeverbeke

Koen Deprez’ *The Armoury* takes the form of a conglomeration of strategies as an answer to real social questions and events formulated in drawings, words and models. Meticulously framed and finished down to the last detail, they call for careful reading. Koen Deprez’ Armoury is his workshop, a ‘house of industry’ where stories are assembled, sometimes even crafted word by word. Armoury also refers to the means Koen Deprez employs to achieve his goal, that of making meaningful buildings and spaces. Situated somewhere between reality and fiction, architecture and object, literature and poetry, it is the rationality, consistency and resolve underlying his body of work that makes it so fascinating.

Once inside the Armoury, it is as if the borders between word and image, drawing and making slowly evaporate. By giving prominence to words and drawings as spaces for architectural research, he is carrying on a tradition that began in the Italian Renaissance. During the Renaissance a distinction was drawn between the practice of the architect and the physical building site. Drawing, as a mental activity, became the architect cum scientist’s new tool for working and planning. Whereas during the Middle Ages images had been regarded as coded references to a reality outside the image, fifteenth century artists regarded the drawing as a window on the world. It is on the interface between those two worlds that The Armoury reveals its paradox: The Armoury’s drawings communicate thought and design processes directed at building while at the same time referring to ideas outside its images. By translating words and messages into architectonic concepts, Koen Deprez questions the discipline from within. Slowly but surely the projects and the requisite imagination become a form of prose, at times inspired by an author, at other times written by the architect as the author – sometimes both, but always with the built reality as the clear focus.

There is always a degree of ambiguity about exhibiting architectural drawings and models. On the one hand, the artefacts are inextricably linked to the creation process and the design to which they refer, while at the same time their artistic merit sometimes outweighs the process or the design and they acquire a degree of autonomy. The latter is a possibility but never the be-all and end-all. This is the duality that constitutes the architectural drawing: in the mind of their creators expressions remain traces of a creative process which refer to a different reality – possibly, but not necessarily, that of the physical space or the building. The Armoury highlights the duality of the architectural drawing and presents itself as a ‘Denkraum’: a spatial constellation which changes, meanders and contradicts itself and at the same time provides scope for reflection, concentration and contemplation. Every artefact that leaves The Armoury is imbued with such sound precision that the images or models function perfectly in their own right. While the drawings are meant to represent spaces and architecture, Koen Deprez appropriates everything to feed his imagination: drawings, models, letters, conceptual frames of reference, etc. one by one they become graphic material, slowly leaving the paper and nestling as ideas in floors and walls and eventually in the heads of the users.

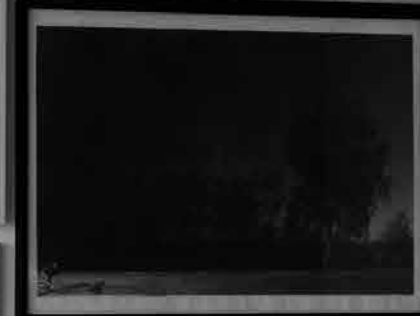
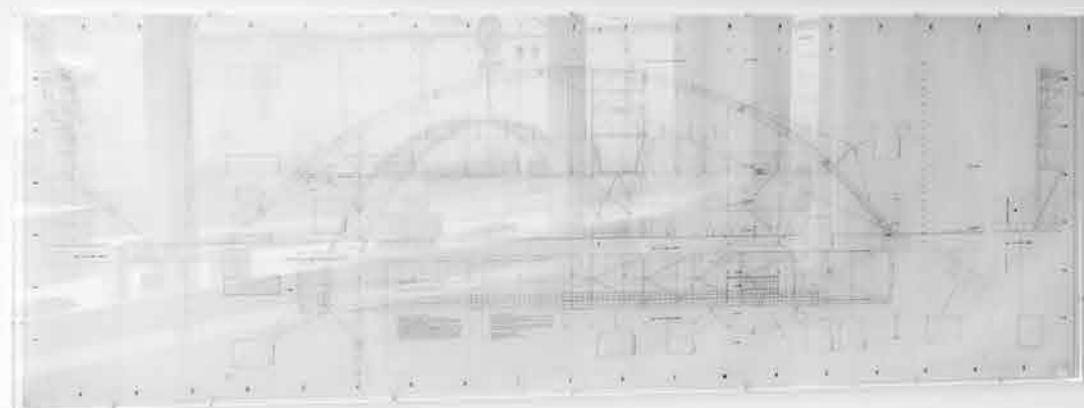
In a world fascinated by the hidden traces of creative processes, Koen Deprez occupies a rather unusual position. As a true strategist, he scours the Armoury for the right tools to make his point. During the design process everything is turned inside out “*until I have it firmly in my grip*” – and once in his grip, he also has a projection of its potential revelation. And then the answer is formulated, unambiguous and almost uncompromising. From that point on the creation process is subordinate to the means to realise the idea. At that moment all former doubt, the thought process, the scribbles, the hitches, the revulsion, the residue of creativity are stowed away in the Armoury’s filing cabinets.

In recent years literature, as the supreme interpretative medium, has played an increasingly important role in the Armoury. Stories are recorded in letters and drawings, revised and rewritten as spatial experiences. During the translation process from word to image Koen Deprez draws on his own memory, the collective memory and the individual memory of future users. Literature allows the designer to merge his own expression with a story - that is not his own - but which has to be reassembled in the head of the users. Contrary to the modernistic creed ‘*form follows function*’, where design a priori prescribes a way of living, Koen Deprez looks for a form of indifference and a context in which that indifference can function. In that way Koen Deprez’ architecture obliges its users to explore and re-explore the spaces and to daydream in them. From a specific endeavour questions are formulated and those questions lead us to reflect upon architecture, interior, form, function, experience and use. The resulting spaces both question and accentuate the triviality of daily life, making living ever more tangible. Answers become confrontations. Opinions provide food for thought. ‘The Thinkable House’, ‘The House of Words’, ‘The Wooff Wooff House’, ‘Elegy for Joseph Brodsky’... The titles presume a conceptual framework rather than a functional agenda.

Once inside the Armoury you begin to see Koen Deprez’ architecture as an autonomous concept. You are taken off on a journey to a world whose secrets are – probably – only known to its master. Though alienating on the surface, the Armoury turns out to be a much more intense experience. ‘The Indeterminate Journey’ project <sup>(1)</sup> is perhaps the perfect metaphor for Koen Deprez’ design and thought processes. You set off together on a journey from an agreed place without really knowing where you are going or for how long. The changing landscape is your only guide. Koen Deprez slowly accompanies you to new and different places before eventually parting company with you and leaving you alone in your own as yet undefined place. The journey (or the building) completed, Koen Deprez leaves the stage. What remains is not a succession of recorded agreements but a new and undiscovered reality. *La naissance du lecteur doit se payer de la mort de l’Auteur.* <sup>(2)</sup> Welcome to Koen Deprez’ Armoury.

(1) Koen Deprez - Joachim Patinir: ‘The Indeterminate Journey’, Lokaal 01, Breda, 2012

(2) Roland Barthes ‘La mort de l’auteur’ (1968). “The birth of the reader must be at the cost of the death of the Author”.



Solo exhibition, THE ARMOURY, Galerie Zwart Huis, Knokke, 2013



Solo booth, BAD Belgium Art & Design Fair, Gent, 2016



Solo booth, BAD Belgium Art & Design Fair, Gent, 2016





Solo exhibition, STRUCTURE AND EVENT, Center for Architecture, New York, 2014



Thermometer, Global view (Brussels), mixed technique, 44 x 33 x 4 cm  
 (right) Solo exhibition, STRUCTURE AND EVENT, Center for Architecture, New York, 2014





Invitation to the exhibition CARROUSEL, architecten de vylde vinck taillieu, ETH Zurich, 2015  
(Elegy for Joseph Brodsky & Word House)



24.08-06.10-2013  
Galerie Zwart Huis  
Zeedijk 635 Knokke - [www.galeriezwarthuis.be](http://www.galeriezwarthuis.be)

# Koen Deprez

Het arsenaal



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19



*About the author:*

Robin Schaeverbeke (1974, Bruges) got fascinated by architecture through a training as a draughtsman within Beaux-Arts methods of (architectural) drawing at the Municipal Academy Of Fine Arts, Bruges. From there on he moved to Ghent and Brussels to take on the study of Master within Architecture graduating in 1998 at the Sint-Lucas School of Architecture. Left Belgium for Rotterdam in 1999 to develop designing and graphical skills within several dutch offices. From 2004 onwards he took the opportunity to teach, redevelop and research directions for drawing courses at KULeuven's Faculty of Architecture in Belgium. Robin has recently finished his PhD project 'Extended Drawing' wherein he explored margins, boundaries and extensions of architects' tools, techniques and formulas for drawing. The project's method draws on the practice and conceptual understanding of (non-idiomatic) improvisation which was inquired as a distinct way of progressing in environments subjected to change.

*Photography:*

Tomas Uyttendaele (pp. 4-7 & cover)

Luc Nagels (pp. 8-9)

Elke Helbig (pp. 10-13)

Filip Dujardin (pp. 16-17)

*Cover:*

Model Rembrandt-Mondriaan project Amsterdam, 1996



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